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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8216th meeting
Tuesday, 27 March 2018, 10.25 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Blok	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Dah
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement (S/2018/128)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2018/174)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement (S/2018/128)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2018/174)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/260, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/128, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement, and document S/2018/174, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2409 (2018).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I would like to welcome you, Sir, as you preside over the Security Council today. I would also like to thank Ambassador Delattre for France's work on this very important mandate.

We are entering a critical time with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and today's vote represents a pivotal juncture for the United Nations Mission there. Just as the previous United Nations Mission helped organize the first free elections in more than 40 years in 2006, the current Mission is now poised to help support the first peaceful transfer of power in the country's history. It has not always been clear that this day would come. Last year the Council said all the right things about prioritizing the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), but throughout the year it was clear that the Mission continued to be pulled in multiple directions. Its mandate was too broad and unfocused.

The Secretary-General's strategic review recognized that lack of focus and called for streamlining the mandate to emphasize a limited set of priorities. We shared that view and have fought to ensure that the protection of civilians and support of the electoral process are at the heart of the Mission. By streamlining the number of non-priority tasks and directing the Mission to allocate resources according to the tasks that remain, we have made it clear that the Mission and the Council will work to fulfil their common purpose, which is ensuring that elections are held. After all, without free, open and credible elections in December, anything that MONUSCO sets out to do will be complicated by political unrest and the spectre of violence.

We even took the step of endorsing key benchmarks leading to elections in December. In advancing those benchmarks, the Mission must work closely with the country's Independent National Electoral Commission, while the Secretary-General must provide honest, accurate assessments of progress — or the lack of it, as the case may be — in the approach to election day. However, adhering to an electoral calendar will

mean little if the Congolese people are denied their fundamental rights to freedom of expression and assembly, or the right to choose among a variety of credible candidates. Free and fair elections simply cannot coexist with attempts to harass, intimidate or otherwise silence voters.

Beyond elections, we sought to make the Mission more responsive by clarifying that the Intervention Brigade operates under the command of the United Nations Force Commander. That mandate enables the Force Commander to deploy the Intervention Brigade throughout the entire country rather than confining it to the east, and ensures that a unified command structure can respond to the needs of the Congolese people. We also sought to improve the performance of MONUSCO's troops. Too many peacekeepers and innocent civilians lost their lives in the past year when the Mission's forces failed to respond. We must hold troops to the highest possible standards and demand accountability if they underperform. The Secretary-General can make a real difference by ensuring that troop performance reviews presented to the Council are clear and actionable. That includes taking concrete steps to address sexual exploitation and abuse. MONUSCO had more reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse than any other United Nations peacekeeping mission in 2017. That cannot continue.

Ultimately, the leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must take responsibility for the future of their country. No Security Council resolution or peacekeeping mission will bring about this incredible country's true potential. There must be the political will necessary to bring about change and to see elections through in 2018. We call on the United Nations, and all States Members of the United Nations, particularly regional partners, to invest more than troops or money. We call on them to invest their time and political capital in promoting free and fair Congolese elections in 2018. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must know that we have their backs, and the Government must know that failure is not an option.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation supported the adoption of resolution 2409 (2018), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for one year. When drafting the resolution, we took into account the overall situation in the country, the assessments by regional Powers and the views of the leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that holding the elections on 23 December, as scheduled, will help to reduce tensions in the country.

We welcome the measures that the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have undertaken in preparation for the December elections, including the passing of a new electoral law, finalization of the revised electoral lists, Parliament's approval of an electoral budget and publication of the election timetable by the Independent National Electoral Commission. In the light of comments that have already made today on the subject of elections, we would like to note that one of the core principles of resolution 2409 (2018) is respect for the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, there should be no attempts to impose solutions to electoral issues on Kinshasa. That also applies to discussions on the issue of using voting machines.

During the critical pre-election period we call on MONUSCO's leadership to keep strictly to the mandate set forth in the resolution adopted today. We would like to recall that pursuant to resolution 2409 (2018), the protection of civilians during the electoral process must be carried out with full respect for the core principles of peacekeeping and without interfering in Kinshasa's domestic affairs. It will be crucial to avoid any possibility of a situation in which MONUSCO will be supporting one of the Congolese parties, especially especially under the pretext of combatting violence surrounding the elections.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): In recent years, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been actively advancing the peace process and enhancing capacity-building in the area of security and governance, and China commends those efforts. Meanwhile, the country is still facing multiple challenges on the political, security and humanitarian fronts and needs the ongoing support and assistance of the international community.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has played an important role in maintaining peace and stability there, and the international community should continue to support it in implementing its mandate. Against that backdrop, China voted in favour of the Council's adoption today

of resolution 2409 (2018), which extends MONUSCO's mandate.

China has always maintained that in providing assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the international community should ensure that its Government takes the lead in resolving its own issues and that its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity is fully respected, helping it to strengthen its own security so that it can achieve peace and stability on its own.

China has always supported a peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has taken an active part in peacekeeping operations there. We have also provided humanitarian assistance, such as medicine and food, and we have actively participated in its reconstruction and economic and social development. China stands ready to work with the international community to continue to play a constructive role in achieving peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I would like to welcome you to the Council today, Mr. President, and to thank France for its work in facilitating the unanimous adoption of resolution 2409 (2018).

I would like to concentrate on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) itself, which has a vital job to do. This is a crucial time in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It stands poised on the verge of hope. With nine months to go before the elections, the country is facing increased insecurity and a deteriorating humanitarian situation in many areas.

MONUSCO needs the strong backing of the Security Council now more than ever, so our unanimous adoption today of resolution 2409 (2018) is all the more important. We particularly welcome the resolution's clear focus on two priorities for the Mission — protecting civilians and supporting the implementation of the 2016 political agreement. As outlined in its strategic review, a whole-of-Mission approach will be needed to successfully deliver on those objectives. We also welcome the strategic review's focus on enabling MONUSCO to evolve so that it is flexible and agile and can respond to emerging protection threats. We welcome the proposals to unlock the Intervention Brigade. At the same time, we should keep these changes under review and make adjustments where necessary, including dealing with the question of temporary reinforcement.

The resolution is clear that the elections must go ahead on 23 December and lead to a peaceful transfer of power in accordance with the Constitution. All parties must ensure that the conditions are in place for credible elections to take place, which means sticking to the electoral calendar and ensuring full implementation of the December 2016 political agreement, including ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Security Council should closely follow progress against these benchmarks in the coming months.

Finally, I would like to stress that the United Kingdom strongly welcomes the language in the resolution on sexual exploitation and abuse. We fully support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy and urge the United Nations to keep the Council fully informed on its progress in implementing that policy.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): We also welcome the adoption of resolution 2409 (2018) and thank the French delegation for its work in facilitating the Security Council's work on the resolution.

The year 2018 will be a crucial one for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and it is clear that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has a critical role to play. One decisive step towards peace and stability will be the holding of credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections on 23 December, ensuring the democratic transfer of power, in accordance with the Constitution and the 31 December 2016 political agreement. MONUSCO has now been given the task of providing the Democratic Republic of the Congo with logistical and technical support and good offices for this endeavour, including ensuring the participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels. It has also been given the task of protecting civilians through a comprehensive approach, making better use of early warning and early responses, including prevention, as well as by improving its military response. In all of this, the Mission needs to be given adequate resources.

I would also like to take this opportunity to underline the important role of the relevant regional organizations and neighbouring countries in ensuring an environment for credible elections. We look forward to continuing to engage with regional actors in order

to facilitate united Council action in support of such efforts.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2409 (2018), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). With this unanimous adoption, the Security Council has once again shown its unity with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a unity that is an essential condition for the success of the process under way.

First, the Council has shown its unity regarding the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The upcoming electoral period will be crucial to the future not only of the country but of the region as a whole. These elections should enable the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the first time in its history, to experience a peaceful transfer of power. The challenge is historic and is being confronted in a delicate context. Without credible and universally accepted elections, the stability of the country and the entire region is at stake. To meet that challenge, several conditions, which the Security Council stresses in the resolution, are necessary.

The first is confidence in the technical process of organizing elections and respect for the electoral calendar. The Council calls on the Congolese officials in charge of organizing the elections, and in particular the Independent National Electoral Commission, to do everything possible to ensure the transparency and credibility of the elections. That includes the effective establishment of the team of international electoral experts that the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the European Union, the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie have proposed to deploy.

The second condition is the creation of an open and peaceful climate in which all candidates can declare their candidacies and campaign freely without fear of reprisal. The Council reiterates its call for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, starting with the right to assembly, as well as the need for the proportionate use of force in the preservation of public order. It calls for the general ban on demonstrations to be lifted. It is essential that the violations that have been seen during the latest demonstrations do not recur and that the perpetrators be brought to justice. In this respect, the Council welcomes the establishment of a joint Congolese commission of inquiry and calls for the implementation of its recommendations. With respect to all these aspects, the Council will continue to follow the electoral preparations very closely and will work in close coordination with the countries of the region to facilitate free, credible, transparent and peaceful elections.

Secondly, the Council has demonstrated its unity with respect to the role it wishes to give to MONUSCO. The Mission has two very clear and closely related priorities: the protection of civilians, on the one hand, and support for the preparation of elections and the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement, on the other. All other Mission activities must be carried out in support of those priorities. Without adequate preparation for the elections, the stability of the country and the security of civilians are at risk. If civilians are not protected, it is the exercise of their right as citizens to decide their future that could be called into question.

Finally, in the resolution, the Council strongly encourages MONUSCO to pursue the internal reforms initiated this year following its strategic review. Progress has been made, and the Mission has undertaken the necessary adjustments. It is seeking to be more responsive and mobile and to make better use of all the tools at its disposal. The integrated approach to the protection of civilians is welcome, as is the concept of protection by projection. The Council has given MONUSCO a clear and achievable mandate and the means to accomplish its tasks, including maintaining its troop ceiling. That is an essential point. It encourages the Secretariat and the Mission, together with its troop-contributing countries, to pursue these reforms with ambition.

Beyond MONUSCO, by successfully coordinating the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement, it is up to all of us — but first and foremost, of course, the Congolese themselves, and especially the regional actors involved under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement, and the region as a whole — to enable all Congolese to regain confidence in the electoral process so that free, inclusive, credible and transparent elections can be held on 23 December. The measures for easing tensions that are provided for in the agreement should contribute to this end.

In our view, those are the conditions for the success of the electoral process in the Democratic Republic

of the Congo within the agreed timetable. The unity we have shown today is an essential asset in this respect. The Council should rest assured of France's firm commitment in this direction in support of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Netherlands.

Today the Security Council sends a strong signal that it stands united in support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). In particular, the Council has reaffirmed the political and technical support that MONUSCO will give to the electoral process. The Kingdom of the Netherlands firmly believes that MONUSCO can and must contribute to the restoration of trust among all parties.

We also welcome the clear benchmarks for the electoral process. We will continue to monitor them, together with the implementation of the 31 December political agreement. We also welcome the addition of a provision on the protection of peaceful demonstrators as part of the protection-of-civilians mandate. The Mission is becoming increasing mobile and agile. We are therefore pleased with the emphasis on the importance of community engagement, key enablers and early warning and response. These are conditions for the successful implementation of the strategic review.

We look forward to the comprehensive performance review and efforts to improve the Mission's effectiveness.

Lastly, the Netherlands fully supports the request to the Secretary-General to carry out contingency planning. That could be a vital tool for preventing the conflict from escalating. This is a crucial year for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the country prepares itself for its first-ever democratic transfer of power. Today the Council has sent a strong signal that it not only stands united behind MONUSCO but, more importantly, behind the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): As your presidency of the Security Council nears its end, my delegation is honoured to be able to congratulate you, Sir, and express its satisfaction and appreciation for the outstanding way in which the Netherlands has led the work of the Council for the month of March.

My delegation is also grateful for the opportunity you have given me to speak to the Council at today's meeting, held to adopt resolution 2409 (2018), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I also want to emphasize how much we respect the Council and once again convey to its members the gratitude of the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the consistent interest that the Council has taken in my country's situation.

My delegation takes note of the Council's adoption of resolution 2409 (2018), thereby extending the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to 31 March 2019. We believe that in taking this action, the United Nations, through the Council, has reaffirmed its willingness to spare no effort to continue the struggle begun nearly two decades ago to help us restore peace and stability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In that regard, what should the Congolese people expect from the mandate? Before answering that question, it is worth mentioning here that, as we have always said, MONUSCO is in the Democratic Republic of Congo at the explicit request of the Congolese Government. It has been operating there for almost 20 years. During that time, the Security Council has renewed successive mandates of the Mission despite the fact that none of them have been implemented to the satisfaction of our people, with the result that many friendly countries are still wondering what this United Nations Mission has been doing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for all those years. As Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, our Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, underscored to the Council on 7 March (see S/PV.8198), my Government's view is that the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate must not become mere routine but should rather represent an opportunity to assess the achievements and failures of previous mandates so as to make the necessary adjustments and corresponding improvements.

Accordingly, the renewal of the mandate should take into account the expectations of the Congolese

people, whose greatest desire is to see the negative forces and various armed groups that are running rampant in the eastern part of our country totally eradicated. In other words, the new mandate of MONUSCO should be implemented in such a way as to enable it to effectively achieve the goals that the Council has set for it, so that peace will be restored to the people in the country's eastern regions. As we understand it, therefore, while the initial mission of the United Nations forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was about peacekeeping and later became part of the efforts to stabilize the situation on the ground, they should now be dedicated first and foremost to their main, defined tasks.

Given that, we believe that today's resolution has two major shortcomings that could jeopardize the ability to achieve its goals. They are the excessive number of its tasks and its ordering and choice of priorities. With regard to their excessive number, we should point out that in the context of stabilizing the situation on the ground, MONUSCO's first responsibility, as most Council members have said, is combating armed groups so as to protect civilians and restore the peace and security that we so urgently need in the country's eastern region. In that regard, we have to say that the Congolese people find it difficult to understand why MONUSCO has to take on other responsibilities when it has still not satisfactorily fulfilled its primary task. In our view, assigning it new tasks takes it even further away from its essential mission.

With regard to the choice of priorities, we believe that better results would be achieved by organizing them starting with combating the armed groups and protecting civilians. Members of the Council will agree that the best way to protect our civilians must be by combating the armed groups, considering that in the eastern part of our country, which is embroiled in armed conflict, civilians are suffering from the worst misdeeds and every kind of abuse at the hands of armed groups and negative forces. Considering the time that MONUSCO has dedicated to resolving that issue, we believe that the resolution could have included a timeline, with a deadline for their eradication. Moreover, given the close links between the armed groups' activities and the illicit traffic in minerals, it would have made a great deal of sense for the resolution to prioritize combating the illicit trade in natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Needless to say, it is an illusion to believe that we can protect civilians without countering the armed groups, just as we cannot eradicate the armed groups without addressing their sources of funding and supply channels.

The second priority could have focused on stabilization and implementing the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration (DDRR) programme. In order to achieve stabilization in the eastern part of the country, stabilization and the support programme for DDRR need to be included among the priorities of MONUSCO's mandate. As Council members are aware, the DDRR programme is crucial to reintegrating ex-combatants into their communities in order to prevent them from being re-recruited by armed groups. The third and fourth priorities could have been reform of the security sector and, lastly, support for the electoral process.

I should add to this the fact that the Council has failed to take into consideration my Government's position regarding its desire for a substantial decrease in the numbers of MONUSCO's troops before the Mission's final withdrawal, which we have expressed to the Council for two years through the strategic dialogue with MONUSCO and which was reiterated on 7 March by my Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. We believe that the Council's position on this cannot be justified by using the holding of elections as a reason not to honour that request.

Despite all those issues, we are pleased to note that the resolution recognizes the importance of the Intervention Brigade and provides for strengthening its operational effectiveness. For my Government, the Intervention Brigade, which so far has been the only offensive force dealing with armed groups, will have to work closely with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC). If it is to regain its former effectiveness, it will have to be adequately equipped. It will therefore appropriate to authorize, as part of its arsenal, its use of Tanzanian artillery and South African aviation, which at one point it had to give up, leading to its ineffectiveness.

In conclusion, I would be remiss if I did not convey the mixed feelings of the Congolese people who, given the failure of MONUSCO's efforts to combat the armed groups, would like to see it finally fulfil its mandated mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that context, as my Vice-Prime Minister said in this Chamber, we believe that the United Nations will have

succeeded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo only when the question of the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate no longer needs to be discussed, because we will have achieved the goal for which it was deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, again as my Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration underscored, we hope that today's resolution will represent the penultimate renewal of MONUSCO's mandate. It is therefore important to ensure that it is built up under the leadership of the FARDC so that all the negative forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are finally neutralized and the peace that the people in the eastern regions of my country dream of becomes a reality there.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.